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The
BLUE-
DRAGON
Ballads

By
Alfred James Fritchey



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THE BLUE-DRAGON BALLADS

By

ALFRED JAMES FRITCHEY

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Prelude to the Ballads

Just before the snow, dearie,
Just before the snow,
When the skies are heavy laden,
And the birds fly low,
What is like to take the window
Arm around you so—
Watching for the first flake, dearie,
Just before the snow?

Watching for the first of winter
By a single flake,
Watching for the scudding lightness
Over field and lake;
I, who love you how much, dearie,
Would that I could so
Ever keep you as you now are,
Just before the snow!

There, I saw the first one, dearie,
No, my precious, no,
Mine was but a feather, yours was
Surely the first snow;
As we sit and watch the fine flakes
Like life's minutes blow,
Let me kiss your sweet lips, dearest,
Just before the snow.

WHENCE THEY ARE NAMED

While falleth the snow,
 And darkens the night,
While fences white glow
 As the crisp flakes alight,
By the Blue Dragon Lamp
 Let us sit us and read;
Heedless of the damp
 And the winter's sharp meed.
Let us read of a time
 When the earth was aglow
With the fine golden clime
 Of the great long ago.

THE GIRDLE OF PEARLS

Nydalia, flower of maids

 In Persia of famèd report,
Was the daughter to one skilled in gold
 And silver, gold-beater at court;

Nydalia, flower of maids

 Would take in the even a groom,
And so in the whitest of tubs
 She was having her bath of perfume.

She thought on the girdle of pearls

 That her father would make for the
 queen;—

On the exquisite girdle of pearls

 That he barely had finished that e'en;
And she said: "I am wedded but once,
 The queen she will have long delight,
And for it I die, still that girdle of pearls
 Must shine on the bride of to-night."

So when she had drest, she stole forth

 Where she knew that the girdle must be,
And took from the girdle its case,
 And danced as she saw it, in glee;

Then over her white virgin zone,

 Which chastely her silk gown displays.
She strung out the beautiful girdle of pearls
 And lo! she was queen of the fays.

Nydalia, sweetest of maids,

Why longest thou fairer to be?

For never yet girdle of pearls

Encircled an one such as she!

Nydalia, rarest of maids,

What wouldst thou, thou hadst not to-
night?

For never in regions that cover the earth

Was seen such a form of delight!

The bride-maids in wonder stood still,—

Astonishment told on them all;

Then forth to the wedding they went,

And shone in her father's great hall.

Her father amazèd doth stand:

Too late to uncircle that ring;

And long did he ponder the whole wedding
night

To think what the morrow might bring.

So in the hall, smiling was wed

Nydalia, fairest of brides;

Then forth to the rich garden, but

Who knows what a garden oft hides?

For out of the darkness, two arms

Encircled and bore her away;

And Nydalia, fairest of brides

Is gone for a life and a day.

Some said that it was the queen's spies;
Some said 'twas the Forty Thieves surely;
And some, of incredulous knd,
Said the tale was imagined all purely;
But there was the father to grieve;
And there was the queen left to fret;
For never such pearls have been seen
In Persia or anywhere yet.

Ah, where is the girdle of pearls,
With pendants so daintily white,
That girded the zone of a maid
With lustre so peerless and bright?
Ah, where is the girdle of pearls?
But where is Nydalia, pray?
Ah, no one could answer in Persia's court
then,
And who now can answer today?

The White Hart and the Morning Glory

Leaping up a mountain side
Went a Hart—a snow-white Hart, too,
From the hounds and Master Hound,
To escape the chase's smart, too.
Then a Morning Glory fair
With a maiden's art not new t' her,

Twined around him panting found,
And safe bound this noble suitor.

But the Hunter who was rich
When he saw the Morning Glory
Twined like a noble Hart,
For his palace wanted sore he;
And when he had homeward gone,
Told his Gardener the story,
Whom he hither sent to bring
Home the harted Morning Glory.

But the Hart—this snow-white Hart, too—
From his silken, clinging tether,
When had gone the hounds and master,
Broke, and sought his mountain heather.
And when came the Gardener
Where these two had been together,
Broken was the Morning Glory,
Torn and twisted was Love's tether.

When the Gardener saw whom
The Morning Glory lost her heart to,
Home he bore her, root and bloom,
And he played a gardener's part, too:
For within a form he chose
Like a hart as e'er could Art do,
Still the Morning Glory shows
Every night where goes her heart to.

THE BLUE BRACELET

There dwelt upon the Libyan shore
A maiden of Arabian birth;
A water-maid she was, no more,
And yet such beauty as the Earth
Has seldom seen to wonder o'er.

And on her arms full bare and white,
More lovely by a plain robe, too,
Two arm-bands claspt her pink flesh tight;
Two bracelets of enameled blue,—
Did make a figure of delight.

Tho' she had suitors high and rich
And damask bowers beckt this maid,
Was offered courtly jewels, which
Had turned a Queen if Flattery paid,
She loved a Youth that filled the niche
Of Brasier, one divinely made.

And they had planned to Babylon
Would hither go, this very night;
Where he the King's forge-gear would don,
And weld his spears and armour bright:
Of course 'twas Fancy worked upon,
But who could say what happen might?

Then as she came to meet, forsooth,
 This night beside the water-well,
Her future lord—that charming youth—
 Why who break forth and on her fell,
But pirates who bound her, in truth.

And bore her to their light trireme;
 For by that shore they lingered bold,
To seize the maidens they would deem
 The richest prize when Grecian sold:
Ah, cruel, cruel was her dream!

But, as she struggled on the sand,
 A bracelet left her rounded arm,
And when the maid was far from land
 And came that Youth, who thought that
 harm
Befel, he found that shining band.

Then when he learned what was her fate,
 He did not rage, nor tear, nor cry;
His was a mind that men call great.
 He went and gathered clansmen nigh,
And started for Bosphorus' gate.

And in the Grecian mountains, he
 And all his band robbed far and near;

Till he was known full famously,
And his became a name to fear,—
Such booty and such maids seized he.

But one day when his band returned,
They brought a maid whose loosened hair
In lovely rings their ardours spurned;
For in her eyes shone such despair
As if a sorrow soul-deep burned.

Then when they brought her to their Chief,
He asked her sorrow, naught she spoke:
“Ho! we shall fathom out your grief,
Tear from her waist, her plum-fringed
cloak.”

How robbers wound beyond belief!

They tore, and lo! a bracelet blue
Was shining on her lovely arm;
It was that water-maiden, too,
And he would do his own love harm:
Who wrong shall Heaven the same wrong do.

And then he wept hot burning tears—
His first—and kist that shining band:
And so, he, after many years,
Led her back to his native land;
And made Love sweet arrears.

YOUTH AND THE CORAL LAND

Whence come the Coral children nigh,
 Bearing that laughing boy along,
Swimming the scudding drifts that fly
 Foamy as wine of Bacchus' song?

Whither the breast that nursed that lad?
 'Twas of the Earth, not of the Sea.
Whither the heart that now is sad
 'Cause of the Coral sprites that flee?

Dark are his locks and beaded black
 His eyes, that laugh in childish glee;
But those eyes so bright shall bring delight
 No more to the shores of Sicily.

Stolen away by the Coral maids
 That live beneath the purple foam:
Long days that shore, they waited for
 The sunburnt lad for their Coral home.

Ah, lucky lad, they'll love you well
 With warm embrace and kisses prest!
But your sparkling eye in vain shall sigh
 For your mother's dear Sicilian breast.

Downward they dove thro' the crystal wave,
Downward, a hundred fathoms deep;
And the dark lad's head seemed like one dead
Ere the rosy Coral mansions peep.

Then herbs of mystic perfume, brewed
In goblets of pale emerald,
The lad they gave, and soon a wave
Of vermeil hue, his visage held.

Behold the Queen of the Coral land
On crocodile encasèd throne!
And on her hair, a bright tiar'
Of rosy tourmalines there shone.

And a radiance of pearly hue,
Ethereal as a bride might be,
Came from the queen when she had seen
The lad from the shores of Sicily.

Then they banqueted from viands rich;
From paly gems sipped liquid dew.
And strange fruits red, the lad they fed
That he might be a sea-ling, too.

Oh! violet tinted the days spent there
With the rosy Coral maids!
For nuts and flowers pleased long hours
In the depths of the ocean glades.

Or sometimes they took a trip upon
A dolphin redly finned,
And gamboled acrost great treasures lost
From Carthage, Tyre and Ind.

Of gold encrusted pyramids
And jewels that muffled shine—
Pining away for the light of day
And the glare of the Orient's wine.

Now the nut-brown lad became a youth:
Ah, the Coral Queen did sigh!
And blushes red hid her lovely head
When the Youth of Earth was nigh.

And if thro' a grove of ocean firs
With carmine pointed sheen,
Was the Youth alone, there always shone
The glow of the Coral Queen.

But the lone lad pined for his earthly kind,
With red love passioned deep;
Not ethereally like the crested sea,
That the Coral maidens keep.

So he stole away at the peep of a day,
And mounted the purple foam;
And glad was the sight in the amber light
Of his dear Sicilian home.

Then kisses hot they gave so dear
 To the lad who slept in a Coral urn,
And all his kith seemed pleased with
 The dark Sicilian's youth's return.

Who is the lass with lips apout,
 And eyes like Caverns of the Night,
Whose cheek doth blush with a rosy flush
 As the Coral lad bursts on her sight?

That is the maid from yon star's soft burn
 Whence essence sthat conquer death
Come: and from the same Amethyst urn
 That lad and lassie each drew breath.

Out where the Stars' pavilion gleamed
 A million studded o'er and o'er,
Out where the spicy zephyrs dreamed,
 They walked on the Sicilian shore.

But the Coral Queen 'neath the purple foam,
 No more love's blushes make her glad;
With all her band she left her land
 To search for the dark Sicilian lad.

Yonder they walk by the gurgling shore.
 O lad and lassie, hold each tight!
Else your love-mixt hearts shall taste no
 more
 Of joy for the Coral Sovran's spite.

For the love of the maid hath killed the spell
Of dwelling 'neath the purple foam;
And the iris spray might chase away
The bloom you had in your Coral home.

Oh! a tidal wave swept o'er the two,
Still clinging to each other's breast,
And there they lay all cold and gray
Where the gulls went circling in the west.

And oft when the evening stars are lit,
And lovers wander off alone,
A moaning fades from the Coral maids,
And a sad song comes from the Coral
Throne.

THE YELLOW SASH

When Rome sat on her seven hills,
And ruled the world, did wander where
Iberia sends her mountain rills,
A goat-herd lad and sister there;
Both dark-eyed and most fair.

And on their birthday once the maid
A silken sash did give the lad,
Of yellow, red and blue displayed,
So beautiful it seemed it had
Been made some Shah to clad.

Then came the Romans, and these two
Were torn apart; the lad became
A gladiator that doth do
With sword or spear the deeds of fame
Which Romans hailed in Honor's name.

The sister went by right of sword
Unto a noble lady, near
To courtly favor; for her lord,
To tell the truth, he doth appear
The Emperor's right-ear.

And so five years were parted two,—
Twin-brother and twin-sister,—when
One day he caught in passing view
That gentle maid of mountain glen,
And much he grievèd then.

So would he wear his sister's gift,
That sash of yellow, red and blue,
When next the myriads thither drift
To hiss or hail a hero new;—
For many died to make a few.

And when the thousand faces swim
And he doth parry the foe's dart,
Perhaps the maid might gaze on him
And breathe a pray'r into his heart;
And find her by such art.

The next day was the fatal game
When in the wide arena all,
The Romans, flocking, hither came,
To see a champion rise or fall:—
"The Sports" they this did call.

And now the amphitheatre
Is crowded, and Imperial
The last arrivals cause a stir.
The heralds for the first lists call.
A hush is over all.

When came a Youth, round whom was wound
A sash whose varied colors fly;
And merriment went round and round:
That one who soon might bleeding lie
Such holiday should tie.

Then came the combat, fierce and long;
And lo! The Youth did fight full well;
But Rome's fierce champion was too strong,
And the young stalwart bleeding fell:—
'Twas as all did fortell.

When as they clamored for that Youth
To death, that made such holiday,
A maiden in the royal booth
Did weep and fall in such dismay,
The Emperor would stay.

Then when he sought the reason why,
She told the story of the sash;
It was her brother she did cry;
And how she wept that he should dash
Into such combat rash.

Thus was her own twin-brother spared,
And given to a sister's care;
And after many days they shared
Again the sweet Iberian air,
Far from the Roman glare.

How after many days, the charm
That tells of a loved one, will bring
The flowing tears so fresh and warm,
That all our happiness will wing;
So doth Love cling!

THESEUS AND PEREGUNE

Young Theseus the valiant to Athens is sped,
And out from yon wood where the phlox
rears a hurdle,
He spies robber Sinnis a-awaitsing his head,
The masks of his victims a-strung to his
girdle.

Be careful young Theseus, or you will be
A food for the ravens on yon sapling tree;
For the pleasure of Sinnis has ever been
found
Dismembering men by a young tree's re-
bound.

But Theseus is agile and Theseus is strong,
And alas, for the fate Sinnis could not
see grappling,
The combat was hardly a few minutes long
Ere Sinnis was bound to his favorite sap-
ling.

Now Peregrine, daughter of Sinnis, away!—
To the slender asparagus reedlings that
sway;

O fairer and frailer and sweeter art thou
Than the wildest, wild blossom that hideth
thy brow!

Then Peregune prayed to the reedlings to
hide her,
And promised if no harm from Theseus
came,
Wherever she roamed, all her kinship beside
her
Should honor asparagus for her good
name.

While Theseus calling to Peregune, said:
"Come hither, O Peregune! hither to wed."
But Peregune's heart went a-bursting in
pain,
And a glorious red poppy sprang up on
the plain.

And Theseus went to Ægeus' halls fair,
Where lazuli-latticed lamps made the
night, noon;
And tho' he was welcomed as son and as heir,
Ah! often he mourns still for sweet Pere-
gune.

THE BRIDE OF THE RED FISH

I am a Diver 'neath the sea
And I search for treasure lost;
In nook and cave of the purple wave
I scour each alien coast.

One summer e'en in the blue Ægean,
Down where marine pits yawn,
Two fishes red swam near my head
Just as my breath was gone.

Just as the Sea went swooning in
A rain of mossy hail,—
And one of the Fish said: "'Tis my wish
That man may hear our tale."

Then in the green of the dark marine
Was I in a pearl white net;
And thus he told—the red Fish old—
His tale in that swooning wet:

"Lo! Tyre rears her jeweled head
Where Beauty sees her robes soft spun;
An opal set in the silvered fret
Of froth that greets the Orient sun.

“There a gallant galley, snowy plumed,
Lay on the coral strand,
With silk tents nigh her, for the Princess of
Tyre
Was bride to a foreign land.

“As the galley’s master, young and strong,—
Came I from the Grecian foam;
For a Greek Prince fair had sent me there
To carry his Princess home.

“O’er the agate stones came joyous tones
Of harp and flute so sweet,
And maids a-glow, pink petals strow,
To carpet the Princess’ feet.

“A dozen virgins in a row
With fragile jars of rare perfumes,
In silken showers of different flowers
And faint with Araby’s rich blooms,

“Precede the Princess faery form
In white where linger blue-bells, fair,
While a lone sapphire made the Heiress of
Tyre
The loveliest of the virgins there.

“When hither she drew, full well I knew
That she was my Princess, all;
Tho’ I sought her hand for the Prince of our
land,
My heart found a silken thrall.

“Oh, was there ever such a sail
O’er a wave that gentler rolled?
For Astarte’s horn rose silver-born
As my Grecian tales I told:

“All of the lovely tales I knew,
Of Dian’, Helen, Psyche’s grove,
And he that was wont o’er the Hellespont
To swim for Hero’s love.

“Ah! sometimes I thought there came a
blush,
Of pink when I drew nigh,
And once I saw a Cupid rush
Away from her maiden sigh.

“But a storm came up—a raging storm—
As we thought our journey o’er,
And there was the onyx silvered form
Of the mount of my native shore.

“Splintered apart the timbers crack;
I caught the Princess’ hand;
And tho’ the billows buffet back,
At last we reach the land.

“Clinging unto each others arms,
That night she was mine, I ween;
But the Prince came down with the morn-
ing’s frown,
And I had his Tyrean queen.

“They brought a scarf of silken strand,
And bound us breast to breast,
And threw us from yon jagged land
Out on the purple crest.

“And now we are fishes red, and swim
In the Emerald realm so bright,”
But I hear a voice,—and a shadow dim;
And I’m back in the clear day light.

THE MAGENTA EARRING

In rough uncultured Sparta, when
Lycurgus ruled, as all aver,
Where at the banquet-board the men,
And at another women were,
And all were equal then,

There was a youth Stenopodas,
That loved a maiden, who alone
Had eyes for him: he saw her pass
When in the sacred dance she was;
Ah! perfect virgin zone!

This youth had brought from some far war,
A fine magneta earring pair,
To give when unobservèd; for
Love was not practised open there,
But was of stealth, they bore.

Now had he pierced, when in a wood,
Her ears, while with a Spartan heart
She saw the drops of blood that should
Down trickle. Then when healed the
smart,
They oft came here,—to part.

Now one day in a combat, he
Did mortal wound a fellow Greek;
And from his country did he flee,
Because of vengeance they might wreak;
The Persian court to seek.

So by his prowess and brave deed,
He rose until a satrapy
Was his; and on a fiery steed
He rode in state, and ever he
Did have rich company.

There in that Eastern pomp, that maid
He did forget: for orient eyes
That sparkle down a Cashmere glade,
Can ween the fiercest hearts that rise
Away from Grecian prize.

But on her Spartan hills did she
Oft mourn that false Stenopodas;
And pondered how, that secretly
She might remind him of what was,
And what should be, alas!

So took she there some cherries red,
That she had cooked; and in the glass,
Which a magenta lustre shed,
She put an earring, which like was
Unto those cherries red,

And sent unto that satrap; who
 When he beheld that peerless fruit
Fresh from his native country, too,—
 And signed "A Lover's Gift," to boot,—
He called a page he knew,

Who poured it in a golden plate;
 And when the fruit had tasted been,
To see if fit for meal of state,
 And when the fruit was fitted seen,
He gave a banquet great.

Then one of them the earring found,
 And showed unto that satrap, who
Was home again on Grecian ground,
 Beside that Spartan maiden, too:
How Love his heart did wound!

So sent he messengers to find
 If there was vengeance 'gainst him still;
And when they brought him tidings kind,
 That no one bore him any ill,
To Sparta doth he will.

But when the maiden saw his dress,
 And all his rich and costly suite,
She did lament in sharp distress
 Her lover's death, in anguish meet;
Such pretense did she press.

Till when he saw he could not win
Her with his Oriental show,
He put on Spartan gown, and in
That simple robe did end her woe,
Her lover she did know.

So that magenta earring came
Unto a lover tho' untrue,
And wrought in him a sense of shame,
That he a wrong would fain undo:
So endeth this tale true.

THE MOON-FISH AND THE CAT

When the Calif Hab Al Rah-zur
Ruled in every wish
Bagdad, came one day a Fisher
With a wondrous fish.

Like unto a silver sliver ,
Never was there known
In the realm of Hab Al Rah-zur
Such rare beauty shown.

So the Calif gave the Fisher
Pieces ten of gold,
For the fragile fish of silver,—
’Twas a Moon-fish told.

Then he placed it in a basin
Carven from a gem;
Where the fountains spray their perfume
Over veil and hem,

Of the harem’s choicest beauties,—
Hab Al Rah-zur’s all:—
But there was not gem upon them
Like that silver ball.

And they all came to admire
Hab Al Rah-zur’s wonder;
Which must surely from the Moon
Have come to Earth under.

Moon-fish swimming in such crystal,
How they crowded there!
How the perfumed waters trembled
At a form so fair!

But when night came down and slumber
Kist with sweetest dreams,
Lo! the fragile Moon-fish vanisht
With its silver beams.

And the Calif's heart was heavy,
Grief the Calif had;
Franticly they searched the palace,
Franticly Bagdad.

Then within the Vizier's mansion,
In an agate bowl,
There they found the Moon-fish swimming:
Evidence, he stole.

So they chained him in a prison,
And returned the fish
To the Calif's splendid garden,
By the Calif's wish.

But when night came, and the Moon-fish
Like the night before,
Vanisht, and was found a-swimming
In the Vizier's door,

When that worthy lay in prison,
"Lo!" the Calif said:
"I will find who does this thieving,
And will have his head."

So he placed a sabered eunuch
Every entrance facin';
Turbaned sentry paced each hour
Round the fish's basin.

But the Moon-fish still as quickly
 Vanisht when night came;
And within the Vizier's mansion
 Was again the same.

So the Calif watcht and found out
 That a wondrous cat,
Oh, a Persian, tortoise-colored,
 And long haired at that,

Came, and in his mouth the Moon-fish
 Bore with wagging tail,
To his master's house,—the Vizier's,—
 Whom they freed from jail,

That he might narrate the story
 By Mahomet's hilt;
And retrace how evidence
 Is not a proof of guilt.

"Know, O Calif," said the Vizier,
 "Tho' 'tis strange to tell,
That a Fisher past my mansion
 With a cat to sell.

"Told me that he had a Moon-fish
 And this cat for pets:
Such a friendship for each other
 Had they, that one frets

“When the other is a-distant;
Till the Fisher’s heart
Would have rent, since went the Moon-fish,
If the cat not part.

“So I bought him, all unknowing
That yourself had bought
This fair Moon-fish from the Fisher
Who such end had thought?

“Then accept my cat, O Calif!”
Such is friendship, that
In the Faithful’s garden Moon-fish
Kisses nose with cat.

MAID O’ THE SILKEN VEILS

Rootlets I dig, of the twisted twig,
A charmed drink to compound;
Rootlets I need, ’neath the tangled reed,
To heal my heart’s sharp wound:

A wound that came from a maiden’s love,
Oh, ’twas no mortal quest!
For her hair was a maze of the sunset’s
blaze
When his glory dies in the west!

And her step was light as a swallow's flight
O'er the flowered cactus burs,
And her brow was white as the chastened
light

When the snow-moon kist the firs.

Oh! she lived in a pine-tree forest deep
In the woodland's tangled glade;
And a cabin, green in its mossy sheen,
Was the home of this mountain maid.

And thither one day I made my way
For love of this naiad lass;
But never a trace caught I of her face.
In the hut, or the peony pass.

Deep in the glade I want, afraid
Lest harm the maid had found,
When I met a sight that turned me white,
And held me silence-bound.

For there she stood and a leopard crouched
To fell her to the sward,
When a silken veil, o'er head and tail,
She cast o'er the crouching pard.

And when she drew that veil away,
'Twas spotted like the beast;
And the pard around, with tail a-ground,
Went whining from the feast.

Then o'er the limp pine needles, she
Went to a fox's lair,
So behind a tree I hid, to see
What did the maiden there.

Over the fox, as he came home,
She cast another veil;
Tho' tricks he tried, he could not hide,
For she covered head and tail.

And as she drew, the keen fox knew
His tricks she from his cleft;
And to his hole he sadly stole,
On the veil his craft was left.

Then 'neath the tangled reedy-marsh,—
A carmine snake that hid,—
She cast a veil o'er the shining scale
Of the circled pyramid.

And all his venom in the veil
She drew, like drops that bleed,
And he wriggled away, like a stunned brute
may,
Into the pipy reed.

Then I heard a mountain lion cry,
That bounded to her side;
To his curdling wail, she cast a veil
Over his tawny hide.

And the lion slinks like one ashamed
Of self, when weak and blind;
But the maiden laught as her nostrils quaft
The drink of the piny wind.

So, too, a dove upon a bush
She covered with a veil,
And his gentle coo she from him drew
In a sheen a-pearled pale.

But I turned my head and away I fled,
Away from that mystic dell;
For I was afraid of the veils o' the maid,
And who could their meaning tell?

For maybe some day when I wooed a dove,
A snake or a leopard fang
Might sting my breast, tho' silken drest
Was the mouth that gave the pang.

THE GREEN COMB

When Pyrrhus levied War's hot stir
About the Tarentines, and in
The city saw there many were
Of comely damsels, he did spin
His Epirots' regard to win.

For then he had a company
Of bravest men, that lacked wives there,
And so of golden trinkets, he,
Of bracelets, earrings, all that be
Full suitable in half to tear,

Did take; and gave to Tarent maids
The one half, to his men that swarm,
The other; then the town invades,
And gave he orders that the maids
Should wed who held half of her charm.

Here was a maid, one Cleona,
Who loved a Tarent youth full well:
Half of the charm that came her way
Was a green comb of amber; shell
Too it had, golden, fretted gay.

Now when she saw the Epirot
That she would win, a huge, stern man,
And old, she on his legs did note
The battle-scars; and so did plan
That she might soon outwit this man.

And so she taunted him and said:
"Behold you come like one that bears
A foot in Styx; whom I would wed,
Is who in foot-race that he shares
With me, must be the one that led."

So said Cleona, for she knew
She was the fleetest Tarent maid;
For like to Hermes' feet she flew
Nor was the Epirot afraid
To match his fleetness with the maid.

But first from Pyrrhus gainèd she
His assent, that if she should win,
She got that pale-green comb, and free
To wed her favored one; or in
A maidenhood fore'er to be.

Thus was the race then run and lost
Unto that Epirot, for lo!
Cleona like a swallow crost
The line, a furlong more or so,
Ere her aged rival's form did show.

Then did Cleona wed her youth;
And many children, kind and sweet
She had, who bore that comb as truth
Unto their children, how she meet
And outwit Pyrrhus by her feet.

So in the generations sped,
The women that would marry none
They love not, since upon their head,
To show that they have will to wed,
Have worn the comb Cleona won.

TALE OF THE GREAT HORNBILL

A bird of rare plumage, jet-black and pure
white,
With great bill of yellow, red-spotted, in
height
Full five feet, grotesque as the pterodactyl,
Is the bird of my story, the giant Hornbill.

A pair of them lived in a garden, where
shone
The fairest of lotus-buds, Earth has e'er
known;

Near a rajah's grand palace, and oft by
the water
By day and by night came the rajah's fine
daughter.

So dark yet so tender, the eyes of the maid
Were, that the great Hornbills were never
afraid,
As if had a Lotus unfolded an Elf;
But all lovers she fled, like own Modesty's
self.

But one suitor, bolder than any she met,
To win that dark maiden, his heart's hope
had set;
But tho' in the palace, he oft was a guest,
She fled him the same as she fled all the
rest.

So he tied to the leg of the Hornbill a note
One night, and within, how he loved her
he wrote;
And when with the Morning, the maiden
did see,
Her heart danceth light and she sang mer-
rily.

Then unto the Hornbill, she tied a love-
letter
That said: "Who would win me than you
must be better;
For I walk every night by the light of the
moon,
And a lover that loves me would catch me
full soon.

But she tied the note on to the Lady Horn-
bill,
And the Hornbills were then in a honey-
moon's thrill,
And the Lady went nesting in hollow tree
by,
And Hornbill did plaster her in snug and
dry.

And when came the Lover and no note he
scans,
He went to the war with the mountainous
clans;
But he never forgot in the deepest of slaugh-
ter
The splendid dark eyes of the rajah's fine
daughter.

Now when he returned from the war, why
the brood
Of the Hornbills into the bright world did
intrude,
And there on the Lady bird was his love-
letter;
He read—and he went to the palace to get
her.

But the maiden has fled to a Vale of a Star,
And never was seen again, near or afar:
And when comes the Spring oft they say
with a wink,
“The Hornbills have got a love-letter, I
think.”

THE ORANGE GOBLET

On one of the Ionian Isles,
When Croesus the last Lydian
Held sceptre o'er, amid the piles
Of rock and shore, there dwelt a man,
A diver and a Carian.

And one day 'neath the ocean deep,
In that strange floating solitude
Where olden barges richly sleep,
He found a goblet, orange-hued,
Full fragile, fine and steep.

Now were his daughter and his mate
Both captive to some pirates bold;
And he that goblet would donate
Unto the king, this Croesus old,
To free them from such fate.

Then as he journeyed hither, he
Did combat with a deadly snake;
And in its mouth he speedily
Did thrust that goblet; then did break
Its head with stone. Beautifully

Ran the snake's skin, a pride on him:
But on that orange goblet clear,
Unnoticed at the fragile brim,
A drop of venom doth appear;
O Carian, have fear!

But water could not cleanse the smart
That lurkt within the goblet's side,
Although he rinsed it well; the art
Of poison oft doth long abide.
Much in a drop may hide.

Then when he found the palace door
The Lord High Chamberlain did seek
His end; and then he told it o'er,
And showed that goblet like a streak
Of orange light. The high Lord bore

A yearning that he might donate
That goblet to his liege and King;
So when his prison-door doth grate
Upon that Diver, he doth bring
That goblet to his King.

Then spread the King his banquet-board
And when the sparkling wine was near,
The rarest of his vintage stored,
He poured into that goblet clear,
And gave to that high Lord.

So bade him drink; which doing, he
Fell in a swoon; and all the court
Fell in great fear that sight to see,
And gathered round from hushèd sport:
It was the King's to be.

Then sent the King to learn the tale
About that goblet; and he found
That Carian in prison pale,
Who doth the story then expound.
The King is wonder-bound.

Thus did he set the Carian free,
And freed his wife and daughter, too;
While gave he gifts full lavishly;
And home he sent that Diver, who
A noble act would do.

THE LADY OF THE HUMMING-BIRDS

Upon the Macedonian hills

Where dwelt a fierce and war-like clan,
There lived a maid whose sparkling trills

With melody the hills o'erran.

Full dainty, black-eyed and with cheek

That glowed a ruby on the tan,

She had a cage of Humming-Birds

She taught beyond the ken of man.

For she could sing full wondrously

Snatches of songs from other climes;

And oft her Birds would mission she

To other lands and other times.

She loved a warrior, fierce and strong;

But women all he held amiss;

And thought it high disdain that one

Should bend his spirit to a kiss.

Then when upon a war-raid, he

Did lead a band on plunder bent

A Humming-Bird commissioned she

To follow him where'r he went;

And in his sleep to sing a tale

Of love unto his war-like heart,

E'en like her own voice: and not fail

To sometime leave an Eros' dart.

So was a Humming-Bird of green,
All ruby-crested with them e'er,
Of glorious and immortal sheen,
A drop of darting color there.
But one time when he fought against
Some Greeks of far superior skill,
With sword they parried well and fenced,
And left him bleeding on a hill.

Then as he swooned, that Humming-Bird
Came nigh and sung into his ear;
And then he grieved he had not heard
The prayer of that maiden dear.
Oh, how he longed again to be
Upon the hills of Macedon,
With that dark maiden's melody
A-pouring in his ears alone!

Then went the Humming-Bird to her,
And told her of her lover's plight;
And over all the peaks that were,
She came to nurse him with delight.
And he was pleased her care to get,
In her sweet tenderness content;
And down the vale where first they met,
When he was well, they wedded went.

THE TOURMALINE VASE

In Persian Susa, long ago,
When Earth and Sea were ruled by spears,
There dwelt a Potter, who altho'
Poor, had a daughter who appears
Was Beauty's regal show.

And when in dainty pantaloons
The Maid on Susa's streets would wend,
The thousands gazed behind. Eftsoons
The giddy courtiers would bend
Like bees round flowered moons.

Her father had a wondrous vase,
Carved from a tourmaline's fine stone,
A gift a friend whose steps did trace
The distant waves; it would alone
His daughter's wedding grace.

It seems a Noble of the realm
Did love this Maiden furiously;
But Love did not her overwhelm,
In truth the Noble hated she:
Maids sometimes hold the helm.

Then when the Noble saw that she
 Did hold his love in fine disdain,
He made her father prisoned be,
 In hope that he revenge might gain;
That vase, too, claimedè he.

Then wept the Maid hot burning tears,
 And saw no more of joy or mirth;
And sorrowed so, that too, appears
 Her spirit fled away from Earth,
One night of the kind years.

She sought that vase of tourmaline
 And filled it so with lustre quite,
That it in Noble's palace seen
 Filled the beholders with delight;
So wondrous was its sheen!

But came one day the King to dine
 Within that Noble's palace hall;
And when he saw the vase so shine,
 For lo! its lustre covered all!
He said: "It should be mine."

And so that vase of tourmaline
 Unto the kingly palace went:
Where over all, its sparkling sheen,
 With wine and mirth and laughter blent,
Beside the King and Queen.

One night then when the King alone
Was walking in his palace hall,
He heard a sad and mourning tone
Come from the vase and round him fall,
Like pearls from Sorrow thrown.

So when he saw whence came that cry,
He from the vase the cause would win;
And then the Maiden did reply,
And told that deed of ruth and sin:
The King did roll his eye.

The same night doth the King then trace
That Noble to a prison-door;
While he in Freedom's garb did place
That ancient Potter, bent and hoar;
And gave him, too, that vase.

And often on a summer's night,
When Potter brooded o'er and o'er,
That vase did fill him with delight,
And comforted until the Door
Did open unto Light.

THE JAGUARINE

Within a forest, dwelt a maid
Fleet as the mountain doe,
Fair as the Lily of the Vale,
Who was she, none did know.
Oft when the forest-wanderer
That heard her wild sweet song,
Came on her beauty suddenly,
He did not tarry long.

For following, a jaguar
Was ever with her seen;
And so the simple peasant folk
Called her the Jaguarine.
There, one Robalt, a woodman's son,
Had often sought this dell,
All unbeknown that furiously
She loved him long and well.

For often as a boy he saw
Her fleeting scarlet sash
The golden tassels of her cap,
Her darkly-fringed lash.
There, too, he saw her pretty cave,
Where cataract did roar,
Where Painted-cups did flaunt and sway,
Before its birch-bark door.

Thither came he with a maid,
A winsome, nut-brown lass,
But what they did, or where they went,
Or how it came to pass,
Is in dispute, but Legend says
That as he hugged the maid,
Upon them came the Jaguarine,
In jealousy, deep-swayed;

And fed them Nightshade berries, and
There came a change upon;
For now three jaguars she has,
Where formerly was one.
And often on a summer's eve
When Twilight sheds her screen,
Mid wail of jaguars is blent
The laughing Jaguarine.

THE GOLDEN PURSE

Now, this is the tale of a purse that was
golden,
All made of shagreen and loose-bound in
its fold
By gay colored silk and a clasp that was
olden,

Which held in its pocket two pieces of
gold;
Two bright shiny pieces just fresh from
their mintage,
Two sly roguish pieces, for ever when one
Was taken, it doubled without e'en a hintage
The purse held the less since its strange
life begun.

Now the purse did belong to a minstrel of
Venice,
A troubadour singing his songs o'er the
land:
Sweet snatches of woods and the far sea-
shore when is
The fragrance of spices blown over the
sand;
A light, careless fellow with jest ever merry
Who sang at the inns or would sing at
a feast,
With an eye for a maid, an attractiveness
very,
Who payed as he went, and cared not the
least.

So singing one day at a wealthy betrothal,
To make a gay party more gay by his
glee,

Where gowns were the richest, of gold-
braided cloth, all
And many an eye sparkled brighter to
see,
He sang with a fervor, a reckless abandon
As if he were even the richest on earth;
With a mandolin singing, a purse with his
hand on,
And a burden of nothing, of nothing but
mirth.

There in the hall modest was one who had
listened
Who loved him at sight, did this maiden
I trow,
With his spangles that glittered, his bright
eye that glistened,
And rich voice and manner that pleased
them all so;
But well did she know that her father a
miser
Had planned her a dissolute man of great
wealth,
And well did she know what he e'er did de-
vise her,
Opposing, was wasting her beauty and
health.

Oh, Love is a pow'r that within the heart's
portals

Once entered and oh, the sweet unrest it
brings,

And so with this maid, 'tis a failing of mor-
tals;

Thus the minstrel's voice played on the
maiden's heart-strings.

So she sent forth her maid for the minstrel
to meet her

When bright was the starlight, and lo
when he came,

He thought that he never beheld any
sweeter;

And so they were lovers with yearnings
the same.

But a servant revealed to his miserly master
The troubador's coming, what partings
they gave,

(O servants, the cause of a many disaster!
What is there at serving that maketh
you slave?)

And told of the magical purse that he car-
ried;

The miser's eyes glistened with malice
and greed.

And then did they plan that the next night
 he tarried,
To lock the maid in, and rob him, indeed.

And so when the minstrel came forth for
 his meeting,
They murdered him there on the path in
 the dark:
The blow of a bludgeon he got for a greet-
 ing,
And there he is lying still, hidden and
 stark.
But when saw the miser the bright yellow
 pieces,
He took out the two, and beheld with a
 curse,
That he who had hoped to be richer than
 Croesus,
Found nothing but ashes was left in the
 purse.

And the maiden was not to be comforted
 ever,
The maiden that waited the minstrel to
 come,
The minstrel that sweetly will sing again
 never,

The lips that were liquid will ever be
dumb.
Some stories have told how the maid over-
hearing
The servant and father their guilt trying
to hide,
Had spread a birth-banquet to them all un-
fearing,
And poisoned the wine and so with them
died.

But the minstrel is gone with his mandolin
hanging,
His sweet songs of mirth and his sonnets
of love,
His grim tales of war with the fierce sabers
clanging,
His madrigals sung to the bright eyes
above;
The minstrel is gone and his mandolin
broken,
His heart that was fervid is lifeless and
cold,
And this shall ye know of him, this be his
token,
His purse holdeth ashes where once it
held gold.

THE DWARF AND THE CANARY

By a pool within a wood
Near a floating lily stood
 A Dwarf: new
Was the cloak whose popped tint
Did weaved mysteries imprint
 As it flew.

Tho' on face, Age flung her curtain
With its wrinkles, still a certain
 Beauty clung,
Like the iridescent sheen
From the beetle's coat of green
 When 'tis young.

For with woodcraft knew he then
Every herb of wood or glen,
 And each flower
Was a globèd realm that beat
With an insect world complete—
 A star-tower.

Now beneath the flags deep-blue
Lived a Nymph, whose beauties do
 So enthrall,
That the birds all came to sing
Every morning to her spring,
For they loved her lingering
 Lisping call

Like the limpid call of brooks
In the wildest strangest nooks,
 Sweetly drawn;
Or the tinkling of a bell
In the faintest, deepest dell
Of a forest, that doth tell
 Her pet faun.

Oft above that pool so deep
He had seen her lovely peep,
 Then was gone:
For she deemed because his face
Was so wrinkled that all grace
 Was withdrawn.

Thus while mused this dwarfish fellow,
A canary bright and yellow
 On the pool
Fell; and up a blue fish darted
Seized the bird and downward started
 To depths cool.

Then the Dwarf, who loved birds, leaping,
(For he heard her young ones weeping)
 Dove down deep
And had reached the swooning frame
Of the bird when o'er him came
 A deep sleep.

When he waked, 'twas under wave
In a marble columned Cave,
 He guessed whose;
Tho' the Nymph was seen nowhere,
Flowers frail and rich and rare
 Were profuse.

And he heard the sweet Canary—
Singing like a wingèd faery
 From a tree;
Tho' her song was far away
Still her piping seemed to say:
 "Follow me."

Following a garden's air,
Came he on that one so fair
 The oft-fleeted,
Where the Cave and waters meet,
And her voice was rich and sweet
 As she greeted.

Then he spoke of loveliness,
Of the spirit that doth dress
 All life here,
Of the glory of the Earth,
Of his one and utter dearth,
Of his hope of a new birth
 In some sphere:

Till the Nymph could not conceal
All the wonder she did feel
 At his mind,
For the intellect so rare
Of a god was shining there,
Till she wondered how she e'er
 Had been blind.

Then she loved him and above
Thro' the waters these three dove,
 And they went
To the Dwarf's hut, where two wed,
And in happiness Time sped,
For the wild canaries shed
 Blandishment.

THE RED OPAL

On a mount in Guadelara,
Remnant of an ancient race,
Lived a little Aztec maiden
 Lithe of form and fair of face;

She who hunted down the congar
 With a quiver and a bow;
Or who chased the mountain big horn
 Till he lay in panting woe.

One day in a cave she entered,
Came she on an oaken door,
With an opal neck-charm on it
And this Aztec motto o'er:

"Take who will this single Opal,
Take and wear it" (so it saith)
"And who loves thee ne'er will alter,
But will love thee e'en in death."

So upon her nut-brown bosom
Hung the pendant Opal red;—
For the Aztec maiden feared not
Portant living, portent dead.

But the fiery Aztec maiden
Red of cheek and jetty eyed,
Was as curious as Pandora,
To find what the cave doth hide.

So she broke the massive door-lock;
And the hinges gave a groan,
As the maiden trod a portal
That was of an age unknown.

Lo! it was a treasure-laden
House of unremembered date,
And the maiden's eyes were dazzled
By the gold and silver plate,—

By the great, grotesqueful idols,—
 Cumbersome and costly dials,—
By the rich-wrought carven columns,—
 By the tasteful, fragile vials.

Urns and pitchers tall and massy,—
 Cups and goblets filligred,—
Implements of shapely culture
 Such as time has ceased to need.

Everything of gold and silver;
 Even swords and shields and spears;
And the maiden stood amazed
 As the gleaming wealth appears.

But she kept her hut of birches
 Tho' her secret slumbered deep;
And she kept the Opal neck-charm,
 Which would from her bosom peep.

Till one day a Spanish horseman
 Gaily dressed did pass that way;
And his youthful eye burned blacker
 As it on the Opal lay;

Which he knew must be a treasure
 Fit, indeed, for one in Spain:
So he wooed the Aztec maiden,
 Falsely wooed her to her pain.

Wooed her till she loved him truly;
Till she told her secrets all;
Till of Montezuma's treasure
One day from her lips did fall.

Then the Spaniard begged to lead him,
By the wedding he foretold,
To the cave of antique wonders,
To the carnival of gold.

"Nay, not so," the maiden answered,
"Till the altar us doth bind";
But he saw a señorita
That in Spain he left behind.

And the Aztec maiden's firmness
Rankled in his Spanish blood:
With a mighty oath he struck her,
And she fell beside the wood.

Then with grasping hand the Opal
From her lovely neck he tore;
From the lifeless Aztec maiden
Lying by her birch-bark door.

But the Opal had a poison;
And, as swift as serpent's dart,
When he tore, its needle entered
In his vein and sought his heart.

So he reeled, and lay beside her;
Clasping still in death her head;—
Aztec maid and Spanish lover,—
Where the Opal burneth red.

THE GOOSE AND THE WATER SNAKE

Down in the rushes so slender and blue
Where gnats dance o'er eddies narrow,
Croucht agile-limbed Domic, the goose-
hunter, who
Waited with bow and with arrow.

Then came swooping down that great flock
from the North;
The first was a splendid white speeder:
So Domic shot, and the wingèd dart forth
Stuck in the wing of the leader.

Then again rose that great flock for flight,
Save two that flew where he was lying,
To help the white Goose in his plight:
An arrow soon sent them a-flying.

Now Domic leapt out to o'ertake,
But the Goose to a briared cove warded,
When a beautiful green and gold Snake
Came out of the water and guarded.

And so every day for a week
 When Domic that Goose had beholden,
Why so every day for a week
 Came out that green Snake and golden.

And one day away to the South
 He saw the great white Goose a-speeding,
His silver tips bright as he ploweth
 To the great flock he soon would be lead-
 ing.

And thus is the reason soon seen
 When the flock sof geese visit the brakes,
There's always a friendship between
 The geese and the green water-snakes.

THE GOLD BELL

In that time when did reign
 Darius, called the Great,
And unto his domain
 Was linkt, too, many a state,
And there were golden tributes ta'en
 In ingots of much weight,
There was a golden bell
 That was made to gayly ring,
When wed was (so they tell)
 The daughter of the king;
A splendid, golden bell
 That melodious could sing.

It a little tower did hold,
Afore the temple door,
Where the gold-veiled and soled
Would pass with it hung o'er;
And like confetti wrapped in gold
Would its notes down on them pour.

Such was the bell's intent—
This gift of some ameer
Where gold full plenteous went,
Cameled where gold was dear.
It was a charming present sent
Unto the king's daughtèr.

But alack! alack! alack!
For that bell in the tower's fold!—
For that gold bell had a crack
Which no one did behold;
And it answered one golden echo back,
And powdered their heads with gold.

LAST WORD

Children, adieu!
 Your minds so sweet
I joy I knew,
 Time's blessings meet
You friendly, all,
 My blessings, too;
One last fond call,
 Children, adieu!



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